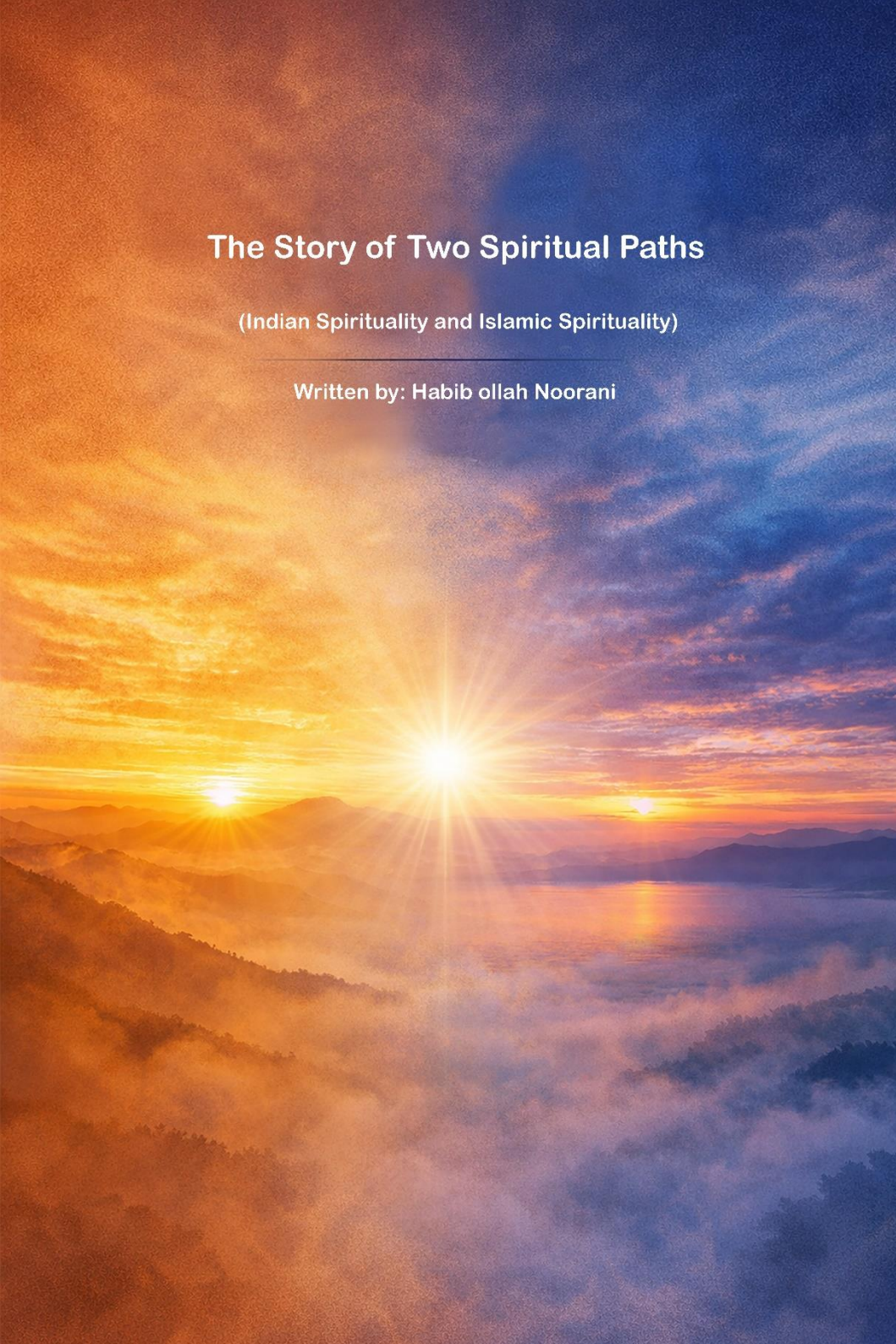

The Story of Two Spiritual Paths

(Indian Spirituality and Islamic Spirituality)

Written by: Habib ollah Noorani

Dedicated to those who have faced hardship and been wounded in life. May this book be a small step toward finding meaning and healing.

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Introduction

In today's world, Buddhist meditation and Islamic mysticism are known as two important spiritual paths. Each of them has its own special features. However, there are deep differences between these two approaches, especially in how they shape a person's inner experiences, mind, and emotions.

This book looks at these two traditions from the point of view of psychology of the mind, philosophy of mind, and mystical philosophy. It tries to explain their similarities and differences in a clear and practical way.

The main goal of this book is to introduce the practical methods of Buddhist meditation and Islamic mysticism, and to show how they affect a person's mental, emotional, and spiritual state. Besides comparing their practices and final goals, the book also studies how these exercises influence inner experiences, feelings, and emotions.

This book is especially useful for readers who already have some basic knowledge of these two spiritual paths and want to understand better how they can use these teachings in their daily lives. The aim is to help readers understand their spiritual experiences more clearly and use them for personal and inner growth.

Habib ollah Noorani
Graduate in Western Philosophy

Chapter One

The Path of Silence: Indian Spirituality and the Mystery of Buddha”

India and Its Spiritual Tradition

Throughout history, India has been known as a land of spirituality. People there have long focused on inner peace, deep thinking, and self-knowledge. In Indian culture, many believed that true happiness comes from reducing attachment to the world and practicing silence and meditation.

For this reason, the forests and mountains of India were full of ascetics—people who left busy daily life for a while to search for truth through spiritual practice in nature. At the same time, temples and ashrams were like schools for the soul. They were places to learn calmness, prayer, and self-understanding.

Some ascetics stayed in these places for many years. Others would leave and guide ordinary people, teaching them how to calm their minds and live more peacefully. Indian society has always shown great respect for this kind of spiritual life. Just as ancient Greece was the center of philosophy and rational thinking, India became the center of meditation, simplicity, and spiritual living—a place many looked to for inner peace and truth.

Indian Religions and Philosophies Before Buddha

Before the birth of Buddha, India was full of different ideas and beliefs. People had many ways of understanding life and the universe. Many philosophies tried to answer one main question: What is the purpose of life, and how can we reach the truth?

A. Vedic Religion

The Vedic religion is one of the oldest religions in India. It involved worshipping many gods, all connected to a great power called Brahman. Brahman was believed to be an eternal and universal force from which everything comes.

- View of existence: Everything in the universe comes from Brahman. To reach truth and peace, humans must turn their attention toward this great reality.
- How to reach truth: People should live calmly, practice meditation, and avoid things that cause pain and suffering.

B. Jainism

Jainism is another very ancient tradition, founded by Mahavira. It strongly emphasizes non-violence and deep respect for all living beings.

- View of existence: According to Jainism, everything is made of two parts: the soul, which is eternal, and matter, which changes. The goal of human life is to purify the soul from all pollution and wrongdoing.
- How to reach truth: People must avoid sins and harm. They should not hurt anyone—not even the smallest living creatures.

C. Sankhya Philosophy

Sankhya is a philosophical system that believes in two main realities: spirit (Purusha) and matter (Prakriti).

- View of existence: The world is made of matter, which is always changing, and spirit, which is stable and unchanging. The goal is to free the spirit from the material world and reach peace and freedom.

- How to reach truth: People must understand the difference between spirit and matter, focus deeply, and reduce attachment to material things.

Sacred Texts and Sources

Before Buddha, several important texts guided spiritual life in India:

- The Vedas: Religious texts mainly about gods and rituals.
- The Upanishads: Philosophical writings about deep spiritual ideas such as Brahman (the eternal reality) and Atman (the human soul).
- The Bhagavad Gita: A famous text presented as a dialogue with a warrior, teaching people how to live well and understand the truth.

Key Ideas and Concepts

Many Indian philosophies shared common ideas:

- Samsara: The endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. All beings are trapped in this cycle.
- Karma: The law of action and result. Good actions lead to good results, and bad actions lead to suffering.

Meditation and Concentration

In most of these philosophies, meditation and mental focus were very important. People believed that by calming the mind and practicing silence, they could free themselves from daily worries and understand a greater truth.

The Goal of Life in These Traditions

The main goal of life was to reach inner peace and full awareness. This could be achieved through meditation, avoiding wrongdoing, and doing good deeds. Ultimately, the goal was to be freed from samsara and reach a lasting state of peace.

Conclusion

Before Buddha was born, Indian philosophies were already searching for ways to reach peace and truth. People wanted freedom from the cycle of birth and death and hoped to reach a higher reality. Buddha challenged some of these ideas and introduced a new approach called the Middle Way—a path that focused not on extreme withdrawal from life, but on balance and clear understanding.

The Life of Buddha

1. Childhood and Youth of Siddhartha

Siddhartha Gautama was born about 2,500 years ago in what is now Nepal. He grew up in a royal and wealthy family. His father, King Suddhodana, wanted him to become a great king, so he protected Siddhartha from seeing pain and suffering in the world. Siddhartha lived in a large and beautiful palace, surrounded by comfort, pleasure, and entertainment. He had everything he wanted.

2. Buddha's Questioning Mind

As Siddhartha grew older, he decided to leave the palace one day. On his first trip outside, he saw things he had never seen before:

- An old and sick man: He saw someone weak and ill. This surprised him because he had never seen sickness before.
- A dead man: He then saw a dead body in the street and people crying around it.
- A calm monk: He also saw a monk who lived in peace and silence. Although the monk owned nothing, he looked calm and happy.

These experiences deeply shocked Siddhartha. He asked himself: *"Why is there so much suffering in the world? Is there a way to escape this suffering?"*

3. Leaving the Palace and Searching for Truth

After seeing these scenes, Siddhartha felt that he could no longer live the same life. He decided to leave everything behind—his palace, his family, his wealth, and his comfort. At the age of 29, he left his home to search for the truth about life and suffering.

4. Years of Hard Practice

For several years, Siddhartha continued his search. He learned from different teachers and practiced meditation and very hard self-discipline. He pushed himself to extreme levels, even eating very little until his body became weak.

After some time, he realized that this extreme practice was not helping him. He understood that the true path is neither luxury

nor extreme hardship. He began to look for a middle way, avoiding both extremes.

5. Enlightenment and the Birth of Buddhism

Finally, Siddhartha sat under a tree known as the Bodhi Tree and decided not to rise until he found the truth. After long meditation, he reached full awareness, called Bodhi (enlightenment).

At that moment, he clearly understood reality. He realized that all human beings experience suffering, but that freedom from suffering is possible. He discovered four main principles, known as the Four Noble Truths.

6. The Four Noble Truths

1. Life includes suffering: No one can completely escape pain, sickness, aging, and death.
2. Suffering comes from desire: Much of our suffering comes from wanting things and becoming attached to them.
3. Freedom from suffering is possible: By letting go of endless desires and fears, we can find real peace.
4. The path to freedom: The way to end suffering is the Eightfold Path, which includes right behavior, right speech, right thinking, and right concentration. This path leads to inner peace.

7. The Teachings of Buddha

After reaching enlightenment, Siddhartha took the name Buddha, which means “the awakened one” or “the enlightened one.” He began teaching people how to free themselves from suffering. He

taught people to live with courage, kindness, mindfulness, and meditation.

8. The Death of Buddha

After many years of teaching and helping others, Buddha passed away at the age of 80. His teachings had a deep impact on the world and are still followed by millions of people today.

Similarities and Differences Between Buddha and Hindu Religions

Rejection of the Eternal Self (Atman)

In Hinduism, one of the key ideas is Atman, which means the eternal soul of a human being. Hindus believe this soul is permanent and unchanging.
However, Buddha rejected this idea. Instead, he taught Anatta (no-self or non-self). According to Buddha, there is no fixed or eternal self. Everything is always changing. Even what we think of as the "self" or "soul" is not permanent and does not last forever.

Buddha and the Rejection of Brahman

In Hindu religions, Brahman is the absolute and eternal reality of the universe. Everything comes from Brahman, and the final goal

of human life is to unite with it (this state is called Moksha). Brahman is one, unchanging, and eternal.

In Buddhism, there is no such fixed and absolute essence. Buddha rejected both Brahman and Atman as eternal realities. He taught that there is no permanent essence in humans or in the universe. Everything is constantly changing. The focus in Buddhism is not union with an absolute being, but freedom from suffering and reaching Nirvana.

Different Paths to Liberation

In Hinduism, there are many paths to reach Moksha (freedom from the cycle of birth and death). These include religious duties, rituals, prayer, worship, and meditation.

Buddha believed that these methods alone could not truly reduce human suffering. He introduced the Middle Way—a path between extreme pleasure and extreme self-denial. According to Buddha, freedom comes through understanding the truth, self-awareness, and inner insight, not through rituals alone.

Extreme Ascetic Practices

During his spiritual search, Buddha first tried very hard ascetic practices that were common among some Hindu seekers at the time. These included extreme fasting, lack of sleep, and severe physical hardship.

After some time, Buddha realized that these extremes were not helpful and could even harm the body and mind. He therefore chose the Middle Way, avoiding both extreme hardship and extreme pleasure.

Samsara and Karma

Both Hinduism and Buddhism accept the idea of Samsara, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. However, they explain it differently.

In Hinduism, karma is closely connected to religious duties and social responsibilities. In Buddhism, karma is more strongly linked to mental states, intention, and awareness. Buddha emphasized changing the mind and understanding reality as the key to liberation.

The Concept of Salvation

In Hinduism, liberation (Moksha) comes through correctly performing religious and ritual duties.
In Buddhism, freedom from suffering comes through full awareness, wisdom, and letting go of attachments.

Methods of Reaching Liberation

Hinduism points to worship, prayer, rituals, and meditation as ways to reach Moksha.
Buddha taught that the best path is mindfulness, meditation, and mental discipline, which lead to a deep understanding of truth and freedom from Samsara.

The View of the Universe in Buddhism

Buddhist philosophy studies the true nature of the world, phenomena, and human experience. Unlike many Western philosophies and Abrahamic religions, which often see the world as divided into higher and lower levels, Buddhism sees reality as continuous and always changing.

Nothing is fixed or permanent. All experiences are connected and constantly influencing one another.

Basic Principles of Buddhist Worldview

1. No Creator in Buddhism

In Buddhist thought, the world and living beings were not created by a single creator or God. Unlike monotheistic religions, Buddhism does not believe in a specific creator.

The world exists through natural processes, cause and effect, and universal laws such as karma. This does not mean life is meaningless, but that reality is understood as a continuous process of change, birth, and death.

In short:

- There is no creator god.
- The universe exists through natural laws and causality.

2. Anicca (Impermanence)

Another key idea in Buddhism is Anicca, which means impermanence. Everything—objects, thoughts, emotions, the body, and the mind—is always changing. Nothing stays the same forever.

This constant change is a basic part of human experience and reality.

3. Objects and Interdependence

In Buddhism, nothing exists independently. All things exist in relation to other things and only for a short time. This idea is called dependent arising.

Everything depends on causes and conditions. Since these conditions change, nothing can remain fixed or permanent—not even human beings.

4. Time and Space in Buddhism

In Buddhist philosophy, time and space are understood differently from traditional Western views. Time is not seen as a fixed, linear flow. Instead, time and space are understood as relative and connected to human experience and the mind.

Because of this, nothing has a fixed time or place by its own nature.

5. Life After Death

In Buddhism, death is not the end of life, but a transition to another stage of existence. Buddhists believe in Samsara, the ongoing cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

Living beings continue in this cycle until they reach Nirvana, the final freedom from suffering and rebirth.

The Human Being in Buddhism

1. Anatta (No-Self)

In Buddhism, there is no fixed or permanent self or identity for human beings or for anything else. This idea is called Anatta, which means *no-self*. According to Buddhism, humans, living beings, objects, and all phenomena are always changing. Nothing has an independent or eternal essence.

This means the idea of a permanent "I" or stable personal identity is rejected. What we call the self is only a temporary combination of changing processes.

2. The Cycle of Life

In Buddhism, life is part of an endless cycle called Samsara. All beings are born, live, die, and are born again. Death is not the end of life. Instead, life continues in another form.

Nothing stays the same. When a person dies, life does not stop—it continues through rebirth. This cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth goes on again and again.

3. Suffering in This Cycle (Dukkha)

One of the basic truths of life in Buddhism is Dukkha, which means suffering, dissatisfaction, or inner discomfort. According to Buddha, suffering is a natural part of human life.

This suffering is not only physical or mental pain. It also comes from deep dissatisfaction caused by constant change, death, and the lack of stability in the world. Humans suffer because they try to hold on to things they believe are permanent—such as the body, the mind, or worldly pleasures—while in reality, everything is always changing.

Buddhism explains suffering through the Four Noble Truths:

a. Suffering exists:
Life includes suffering, pain, and dissatisfaction, both physical and mental.

b. Suffering has a cause:
The main cause of suffering is desire and attachment—wanting things to stay the same or wanting things we do not have.

c. Suffering can end:
By letting go of desires and attachments, suffering can end. This state of freedom is called Nirvana, which also means freedom from the cycle of Samsara.

d. The path to end suffering:
Buddha taught the Noble Eightfold Path, a set of moral, mental, and wisdom-based practices that lead to freedom from suffering and to Nirvana.

4. The Path to Freedom

The main goal in Buddhism is to be freed from the endless cycle of Samsara and reach complete peace, called Nirvana. When a person reaches Nirvana, they no longer return to the cycle of birth and death and are free from suffering.

To reach Nirvana, one must let go of attachments and understand that life is always changing and nothing is permanent.

5. Who Can Be Freed from the Cycle?

Those who follow the path taught by Buddha and live in the right way can be freed from Samsara. These people reach full awareness and eventually attain Nirvana.

Buddha taught that once someone reaches this state, they are no longer reborn and are fully free from suffering.

6. How Can We Be Saved? The Eightfold Path

To escape the cycle of suffering, Buddhists follow the Noble Eightfold Path, which includes eight practices:

1. Right View: Understanding the truth of life.
2. Right Thought: Having healthy and positive intentions.
3. Right Speech: Speaking truthfully and kindly.
4. Right Action: Doing good and avoiding harm.
5. Right Livelihood: Living in a moral and honest way.
6. Right Effort: Making effort toward awareness and goodness.
7. Right Mindfulness: Being aware through meditation and attention.
8. Right Concentration: Deep inner focus and meditation.

These steps help people free themselves from suffering and reach true peace.

7. The World After Death

In Buddhism, there is no belief in heaven and hell in the same way as in Abrahamic religions. The final goal is Nirvana, which means freedom from rebirth and complete peace. Once someone reaches Nirvana, they do not return to Samsara.

8. Reward and Punishment After Death

In Buddhism, people do not go directly to heaven or hell after death. Instead, rebirth depends on karma—the actions a person performed in previous lives.

- Good actions can lead to rebirth in better conditions.
- Bad actions can lead to rebirth in more difficult conditions.

9. **Meditation in the Buddhist Tradition**

According to Buddha, the human mind is usually restless and unsettled. He compared the mind to a monkey jumping from branch to branch, moving constantly from one thought or feeling to another. This mental restlessness creates anxiety and inner suffering.

Buddha taught that peace and clarity come when the mind becomes quiet. To achieve this, he introduced meditation, which has two main forms.

A. Breathing Meditation

The first type of meditation focuses on breathing and is closely connected to the body. In Buddhism, breathing is seen as a bridge between body and mind.

Slow and natural belly breathing helps the mind calm down and follow a steady rhythm. When the mind wanders, this is considered natural. Gently bringing attention back to the breath—without judgment or anger—is an important part of the practice.

This meditation starts with the body and gradually creates physical and then mental calm.

B. Mindfulness Meditation (Direct Observation of the Mind)

This deeper meditation focuses on observing the mind itself and has three main stages:

1. Watching Thoughts

In this stage, thoughts are not stopped but simply observed. Buddha compared this to watching clouds pass by while standing on a mountain. Thoughts come and go, and the observer does not judge or react.

Over time, this calm observation reduces mental noise. Since many worries come from thoughts, observing them without attachment creates inner silence.

2. Watching Feelings and Emotions

Next, attention turns to emotions. Like thoughts, emotions are temporary. When feelings are observed without judgment or attachment, they lose strength and the mind becomes even calmer.

This state is like a monk sitting by a river—he hears the water but is free from mental disturbance.

3. Observing the Observer

In the final stage, attention turns toward the observer itself. Even the sense of "being an observer" slowly fades. This leads to a deep state of silence, emptiness, and freedom.

Buddha saw this state as a form of awakening—where the restless mind becomes completely calm and free.

Effects and Benefits of Meditation

The effects of meditation appear gradually. The second stage is difficult, and the third is very difficult, but with regular practice, calmness becomes natural.

One of the greatest benefits of meditation is mental clarity. Regrets about the past and worries about the future fade away. Thoughts lose power when they are only observed, not followed.

The meditative mind lives in the present moment, not in imagined pasts or futures. Inner peace, reduced anxiety, and fewer disturbing thoughts are among the main results.

The third stage is usually reached by advanced meditators, where deep inner awareness and awakening appear.

Other Human Beings in Buddhism

Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, had a deep and ethical view of human beings and how we should treat others. In his teachings, humans are not divided into categories; all beings, especially humans, deserve respect and kindness. Here are some key points about Buddha's view and how to behave toward others:

1. All Humans Are Valuable

Buddha believed that every person has the potential for spiritual growth and enlightenment. No one should be looked down upon or belittled.

2. Kindness (Metta)

Buddha emphasized treating all beings with kindness and compassion, even those who are hostile or enemies. This unconditional kindness means helping, respecting, and not causing harm.

3. Do Not Judge Others for the Past

Buddha taught that quick judgment of others leads to suffering and hostility. Instead, we should understand and be patient with others.

4. Avoid Violence and Harm (Ahimsa)

A key ethical principle in Buddhism is not harming any living being. Even when others behave badly, one should avoid physical, verbal, or mental violence.

5. Be Fair and Honest

Buddha advised that in relationships, one should be honest, fair, and avoid deceit or cheating.

6. Awareness of the Effects of Our Actions

Buddha stressed that every action affects ourselves and others. Therefore, we should act with awareness and responsibility.

Summary

According to Buddha, the best way to treat others includes:

- Kindness and compassion
- Justice and fairness
- Patience and understanding
- Avoiding harm

Even in difficult situations, our behavior should show wisdom and compassion, not hatred or revenge.

Chapter Two

“The Mirror of Love: Spiritual Journey in Islamic Mysticism (Sufism)”

Introduction to Islamic Mysticism (Sufism)

I believe that certain verses of the Quran played a key role in shaping Islamic mysticism over history. These verses, which speak about the dignity of human beings, the presence of the divine spirit within humans, and the greatness of human status, drew early Muslims' attention to the inner soul and its hidden potential.

The Quran emphasizes not only reason and intellect but also another force called the heart, which it describes as the center of faith and the source of true peace. Here, the "heart" refers to the inner self, feelings, and deepest part of human existence.

Another important teaching in the Quran is Dhikr, which means constant remembrance or repetition of divine names and truths. Dhikr directly affects the heart, as the Quran says: *"Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest"* (Quran 13:28).

These teachings—human dignity, the duality of intellect and heart, and the role of Dhikr—led early Muslims to a kind of knowledge not based on intellect alone, but on inner experience and the heart. Through Dhikr and meditation, one could achieve intuitive knowledge, perceive some spiritual realities, and experience higher, immaterial realms.

The Quran presents the heart as the center of faith, peace, and emotion, making it a key focus of Islamic mystical tradition. Early Muslims believed that the divine essence resides within the human soul, and through purification of the heart and Dhikr, the heart could reflect divine light and inspiration. These inner experiences formed the early core of Sufism, which sought a closer and more vibrant relationship with God through spiritual refinement, understanding, and mystical insight.

Another factor influencing Sufism was the translation movement during the 2nd and 3rd Islamic centuries, which introduced Greek philosophy to the Islamic world. Works of Plato and Plotinus, later interpreted by philosophers like Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, and Avicenna (Ibn Sina), opened new horizons for Islamic thought and influenced Sufi ideas.

- Plato emphasized the superiority of the soul and the human desire to return to the realm of forms—ideas compatible with Quranic teachings and later reflected in the works of Suhrawardi, Attar, and Rumi.
- Plotinus introduced concepts like emanation and hierarchy (*One → Intellect → Soul → Nature*) and the possibility of union with the One, which deeply affected Islamic mysticism.

Thus, Islamic mysticism developed both from Quranic and heart-centered roots and from Neo-Platonic ideas such as unity of existence, manifestation, spiritual ascent, and union with ultimate truth, becoming richer over time.

Islamic Mysticism from the 1st to the 7th Century AH

Islamic mysticism began with ascetic and inner-focused practices and gradually evolved over the first seven centuries into a structured spiritual-philosophical tradition.

- 1st Century AH: Hasan al-Basri emphasized fear of God, repentance, and self-examination, laying the foundations

of Islamic asceticism as a spiritual response to worldly distractions.

- 2nd Century AH: Rabia al-Adawiyya introduced divine love, elevating mysticism from fear to heart-centered devotion. She emphasized pure love for God as the core of spiritual practice.
- 3rd Century AH: Mysticism entered the stage of inner and intuitive experiences. Bayazid Bastami explored concepts like annihilation (*fana*) and ecstatic states, while Junayd al-Baghdadi balanced mysticism within tradition and rationality, forming a coherent Sufi system.
- 4th–6th Centuries AH: Mysticism became social and literary. Al-Ghazali integrated Sufism with Sharia in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, making it central to religious life. In Khorasan, figures like Abu al-Hasan Kharaqani presented Sufism in a human-centered way, while Attar of Nishapur used poetry and allegory (*e.g., The Conference of the Birds*) to spread Sufi ideas.
- 7th Century AH: Sufism split into two major streams:
    1. Love-based and literary Sufism, reaching its peak with Rumi, where divine love became universal, poetic, and human-centered.
    2. Philosophical Sufism, developed by Ibn Arabi, who introduced concepts like Unity of Existence (*Wahdat al-Wujud*) and hierarchical emanation, systematizing mystical thought into a philosophical framework.

In summary, Islamic mysticism evolved over seven centuries from ethical asceticism, through divine love and intuitive experiences, into a structured, literary, and philosophical tradition, culminating in profound spiritual and intellectual achievements.

The Map of the World in Islamic Mysticism – Simple Version

In the beginning, only God existed; an absolute reality full of love and kindness. The world and everything in it came from His love. All creatures and objects are reflections of His light and love. Mystics say the world is like waves rising from an endless ocean of light and love.

The world is like a stairway from multiplicity to unity. The closer we get to the source, the more clearly we feel the love and light. God is not a separate being but the origin of everything.

- In the higher realms: Love and God's presence are complete and clear; there is no distance between the lover and the beloved.
- In the lower realm (the material world): God's light appears in many different forms and colors. Even this world is not empty of light and love. Every leaf, stone, drop of rain, and human action shows a part of God's presence.

The world, even with all its challenges, is not a prison but a school for the soul. Humans should see signs of God's truth and love in everything and find unity behind all diversity.

Mystics say that when someone understands this unity, their life changes, and the world becomes a place of love and peace.

In the end, they say:
"Everything that exists is Him; and I am only a loving shadow before that endless light."

Human in Islamic Mysticism

In the discussion of humans in Islamic mysticism, six points are addressed.

1. Human Dignity

Human dignity: The first point is self-respect. The highest divine aspect has been entrusted to humans, and the mystic encounters within themselves a beloved and precious being. This honoring and inner love arises from within. By respecting the self, a human soars and attains spiritual elevation; conversely, by despising the inner self, the soul sinks into the depths of darkness.

The Quran clearly presents a majestic and dignified image of humans. On one hand, humans are described as inherently "honored" and "chosen," so much so that even angels prostrated to them by God's command, and the role of "vicegerency" on Earth was entrusted to them. On the other hand, their inner reality is called a "divine spirit" that originates from the domain of God's command and has been breathed into them. These two elements form the elevated identity of humans.

2. Two Inner Residents (Soul and Body)

In the mystical understanding, humans are divided into two parts: the soul and the body. The soul has a high and divine essence, while the body is material and natural. This interpretation is derived from the Quran.

In the Quran, human creation is described with two different origins: one exalted, luminous, and divine, and the other earthly and material. This duality later became fundamental in anthropology and Islamic mysticism.

Humans have two main dimensions: soul and body.

- Soul: Belongs to the "divine command" and is a breath of God—a divine, timeless, celestial light that mystics call the "luminous essence" or "heavenly soul."
- Body: Made of matter and soil, it is limited, vulnerable, and dependent. Mystics call it the "garment of the soul" or "prison of the soul."

In other words, humans are a combination of a celestial aspect and an earthly aspect.

a. Soul and the Soul's Desires

The soul is the real essence of humans; it is neither stone, wood, nor soil, and it does not belong to the material world. Its reality is finer, nobler, and higher than any material element. The soul was originally present in the realm of unity, love, and peace, but now, by wisdom or necessity, it is confined within the body and placed in this material world.

The soul is like a drop separated from the ocean, yearning to return to its infinite source. This eternal longing is the desire for the unity, love, and security where it once resided. The ultimate goal of the soul is to return to its true home—the realm of unity, absolute peace, and security from which it originated.

b. Body and the Body's Needs

From the mystics' perspective, the body is like a temporary garment or house for the soul. The soul needs the body to act and experience in the material world, and the body is the instrument through which the soul's will and desire are manifested. Maintaining the body's health is essential, but the body is not the human's true reality; it is only a tool serving the soul's path to perfection. The body is not the essence of the human, but its companion, and only fulfills its true function when healthy, balanced, and ready to serve the soul's path.

The needs of the body and the human self can be divided into two categories:

- Bodily (physical) needs:
  These relate to human survival: food, rest, health, physical activity, work, and social interaction. These needs keep the body healthy and functional, allowing the soul to act in the material world and pursue its path.
- Psychological needs:
  - Primary psychological needs: Security, love, and being acknowledged. These are foundational and essential for mental health.
  - Secondary psychological needs: Ambition, desire for fame, popularity, and superiority. If uncontrolled, these can dominate the mind and distract it from the soul's authentic path.

3. The Workshop of the Mind and the Tool of Attention

The mind can be likened to a large white circle where all kinds of content—concepts, imaginations, feelings, and worries—appear and pass through. This content sometimes arises from bodily

needs and sometimes from psychological needs. The mind is, as mentioned, a field of multiple sounds and invitations.

The main tool for the mind's function is attention. The mind can focus on one of these sounds or contents and highlight it. When a person focuses on a particular subject or need, we say, "their mind is engaged with that subject."

The mind itself has no content, shape, or color; but when attention is directed toward a concept or feeling, the mind gradually takes on the color and form of that meaning or feeling.

Sometimes, certain contents or needs remain in the mind continuously:

- They occupy the mind for a long time,
- And attention repeatedly returns to them.

In this case, the subject becomes vivid and prioritized, and it appears essential or vital to the mind.

4. Dhikr (Remembrance) and Mind Engineering

The mystic's goal is to strengthen and center a specific meaning in the mind and psyche. A meaning gains power in the mind when continuous attention is directed to it, and its presence is long-lasting and stable.

Mystics use dhikr—repetition, remembrance, and continuous visualization of a truth or higher concept—to guide the mind toward elevated matters. The more a meaning is present and repeated in the mind, the stronger, clearer, and more effective it becomes.

Mystics repeatedly repeat meanings related to divine attributes and absolute truth to direct the mind toward light, peace, and spiritual elevation, and to establish the presence of these concepts within themselves.

Dhikr includes words that remind one of unity, peace, love, and divine beauty. These words carry positive meanings, causing the mind to adopt the color and essence of those meanings, aligning the surrounding space—including the body and emotional states—with the same meaning.

For example, when a word related to kindness is repeated continuously:

- The mind, which is empty and without inherent content, acquires the color and essence of security, being valued, and other related aspects of kindness.
- If this meaning is repeated frequently, associated concepts also activate, and the mental and physical environment aligns with it.

The same principle applies to negative meanings: If a person continuously repeats a word with negative connotations—like fear, chaos, or insecurity—the mind is drawn toward that direction, and even the body and surrounding environment respond accordingly.

In general, dhikr helps unify the scattered parts of a human being. The deeper the repetition, the more the entire being—including body and mind—is harmonized with that meaning, and with each repetition, its strength and influence grow.

5. Birth of Elevated Emotions

When a mystic continuously flows a meaning in their mind, it not only strengthens focus on that meaning but also awakens elevated emotions. They see themselves as valuable and a manifestation of the divine and remember that death is not the end; instead, a life full of security, joy, and delight awaits them.

This mental awareness removes fundamental fear of death and generates hope for a safe and exciting future. The mystic's mind, full of positive meanings, hope, and peace, experiences ecstatic joy, like Rumi's whirling dance. These elevated emotions result from believing in one's existential value and a better future, guiding them toward higher ranks and spiritual perfection.

6. Freeing the Mind from Low Matters

What the mystic most avoids and encourages others to avoid is excessive focus of the mind on bodily needs and secondary psychological needs. If a person excessively values worldly matters, the body's and psyche's desires are strengthened and prioritized, and the soul is, in effect, "sold." Such a person forgets their true value and high position, unaware that they are a noble and divine being.

Other Humans in Mysticism

In Islamic mysticism, especially in the spiritual path of the Sufis, the view of the "other" and how one interacts with people holds a

central place. In this perspective, all humans are seen as manifestations and reflections of the Divine Truth; therefore, one's behavior toward them must not only be free from harm and injury but also oriented toward service, compassion, and collective elevation. This principle extends to society at large, obliging the mystic to take steps toward realizing the common good, welfare, security, and comfort of all.

The main points of this mystical outlook can be summarized in the following key points:

1. Love for Creation as Manifestation of Love for the Creator

Great mystics such as Ibn Arabi and Jalaluddin Rumi emphasize that showing love to created beings is a clear indication of love for the Creator. From their perspective, violence, hatred, and mistreatment of others reflect a deficiency in spiritual practice and distance from the truth of divine love.

2. Inner Peace and Avoidance of Outer Violence

Peace and avoidance of all forms of violence—physical, verbal, or internal—are fundamental principles of mystical ethics. Sufis like Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi and orders such as the Kharaqaniyah stressed patience, tolerance, and gentle responses even toward opponents and enemies. They considered violence a sign of spiritual weakness and a distance from stages of perfection.

3. Teachings of the Kharaqani School

The Kharaqanis (associated with Bayazid Bastami or Abu al-Hasan Kharaqani) provide insightful guidance on the relationship with creation. One famous teaching states:

"Be gentle with all beings and make no one your enemy, for all come from the same source."
From their perspective, kindness is the main instrument of connection, and the deeper this kindness, the stronger the connection to Truth. They warned that any harm done to others ultimately returns to the individual themselves.

4. A Unified and Compassion-Centered View of Humans

In mystical thought, every person—even an enemy or someone who causes harm—is considered part of the Divine display and a means for testing and nurturing the soul. Therefore, appropriate behavior toward them is not based on social status but founded on compassion, kindness, and the recognition of this fundamental unity. Mercy and forgiveness in this tradition are regarded as among the highest spiritual acts.

Chapter Three

Scientific Evidence on Meditation and Dhikr (Remembrance of God)

Scientific Evidence on Repeating Positive Words (Dhikr)

Scientific evidence shows that repeating positive words and meanings, known in the language of mysticism as *dhikr*, has profound effects on the human brain and psyche. In neuroscience, the principle of neuroplasticity states that the brain is not a fixed, unchangeable structure; neurons and their connections change in response to experience, practice, and repetition. From this perspective, whenever a person repeatedly focuses on a positive concept, the same network of neurons is continuously activated, and over time, the synaptic connections related to that meaning are strengthened. In this way, that concept becomes a dominant and readily accessible mental pattern.

Neuroimaging studies have also shown that practices focused on repetition, such as mantras, prayers, or dhikr, create noticeable changes in the structure and function of the brain. These practices increase activity and even thickness in the prefrontal cortex, a region responsible for emotion regulation, focus, and decision-making. Simultaneously, activity and volume of the amygdala, which processes fear and anxiety, decrease in individuals who regularly engage in such practices. These neurological changes are directly associated with reduced anxiety and increased feelings of calm. Additionally, dhikr and meditation reduce activity in the default mode network, a network associated with rumination, worry, and mental preoccupation with the past and future. Reduced activity here fosters greater mindfulness and less psychological restlessness.

From a neurochemical perspective, studies show that focusing on and repeating calming meanings can modulate the release of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine, improving mood, motivation, and the sense of pleasure. Cortisol, the stress hormone, also decreases with mindful practices, producing

positive effects on the immune system, inflammation, and physical relaxation. Alongside these changes, conscious repetition of a positive meaning strengthens cognitive control, helping individuals keep their attention away from intrusive thoughts. Over time, this skill becomes ingrained, enhancing focus and calmness.

Furthermore, repetition of a meaning is often accompanied by mental imagery and related emotions. Since the brain does not strongly differentiate between vivid imagination and real experience, mental repetition of positive meanings can trigger neural responses similar to experiencing real-life calmness.

In psychology, ample evidence shows that repeating positive meanings has a direct and lasting effect on mental health. In classical conditioning, if a phrase or word is repeatedly paired with a specific emotional state, that phrase alone can eventually evoke the same emotional state. This explains why repeated negative thoughts intensify anxiety, whereas repetition of calming phrases can itself become a source of peace. In operant conditioning, thoughts paired with reinforcement—positive or negative—are more likely to recur.

From a cognitive perspective, repeated thoughts or meanings form mental schemas—stable patterns through which individuals interpret the world and themselves. Negative automatic thoughts in disorders such as depression largely result from long-term repetition of these patterns. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) works by identifying, correcting, and replacing negative thoughts with realistic and positive ones, a process fundamentally based on repetition. The broaden-and-build theory also suggests that positive emotions expand attention and, over time, help build lasting psychological resources. From this view, repeating positive meanings can create a constructive cycle of emotional and mental growth.

Research on self-talk also shows that encouraging and positive statements, if believable and balanced, enhance self-efficacy, motivation, and performance. Conversely, negative self-talk increases anxiety and undermines abilities. Moreover, the human mind naturally gravitates toward what it focuses on. Repetition of negative thoughts biases attention toward threats, while repetition of positive thoughts biases attention toward opportunities and beauty. The theory of emotional information processing states that mentally revisiting a positive or negative thought can produce responses almost identical to those triggered by real experiences of that event.

Evidence-based psychotherapy emphasizes the centrality of repetition. In cognitive restructuring, clients learn to identify negative thoughts and consciously replace them with new statements, repeating them regularly. Positive affirmation practices—when phrases are realistic, personal, and believable—enhance motivation, calmness, and hope. Similarly, gratitude exercises, which are a systematic repetition of positive meanings, are among the most effective positive psychology interventions, consistently increasing happiness and mental health.

In summary, the human mind is a repetition-based learning system. Any meaning repeatedly focused on or repeated in self-talk gradually becomes a dominant mental pattern, influencing perception, emotion, and behavior. Repeating negative meanings strengthens negative patterns, increasing anxiety and depression, whereas repeating realistic, positive meanings strengthens constructive schemas, enhances resilience, and improves mental health. Psychology emphasizes that unrealistic positivity is ineffective; what is transformative is the repetition of balanced and believable positive meanings. This principle aligns deeply with the wisdom of *dhikr* in mystical traditions, which emphasizes attention to sublime and true meanings.

Scientific Evidence for Buddhist Meditation (Mindfulness)

As explained in the discussion of Buddhist meditation, in this type of practice, the individual becomes aware of their thoughts, emotions, and internal sensations without getting entangled with them or judging them. In mindfulness, unlike *dhikr* or repetition of positive meanings, the goal is not to create a new mental state or strengthen a desirable concept; rather, it is to focus on neutral observation of the flow of the mind and the release of any thought or emotion. In such a state, mental content gradually subsides, and a sense of stillness and present-moment awareness emerges. In this section, the psychological and neuroscientific effects of this type of meditation are examined.

From a psychological perspective, mindfulness in modern psychology is defined as non-judgmental awareness of present-moment experience. A fundamental feature of this method is observation without reaction—meaning the individual notices thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations but does not allow these phenomena to trigger emotional reactions or immediate behaviors. This approach reduces rumination, decreases anxiety related to the future, and alleviates depressive states related to the past. Another feature of mindfulness is cognitive distancing or detachment from mental content. Here, the individual realizes that thoughts and emotions are not part of their identity but transient events that arise and fade in the mind. Additionally, continuous mindfulness practice increases attentional capacity and enhances the quality of present-moment awareness. However, this method does not, by itself, create new emotional meanings or positive content in the mind. Therefore, the main psychological outcome of mindfulness is stress reduction, increased calmness, and improved present-moment awareness, rather than forming positive schemas or generating new emotions.

From a neuroscientific perspective, studies show that mindfulness meditation—without focusing on a particular meaning or emotion—produces significant changes in the brain. The first change occurs in the prefrontal cortex, a brain region crucial for emotion regulation, behavior control, and attention management. Activation of this area increases cognitive inhibition and reduces automatic emotional reactions. Another important change is the reduction of activity in the default mode network (DMN), a network usually active during mind-wandering, rumination, and self-centered judgments. Reduced activity in this network makes the mind less drawn to past or future events and enhances presence in the moment.

However, unlike practices such as *dhikr* or mantras, which rely on meaning and can therefore activate neural circuits associated with reward, love, hope, or a sense of safety, content-free mindfulness does not have this effect. This is because the method intentionally avoids creating meaning or stimulating positive emotion. Therefore, the resulting neural reorganization primarily promotes calming and regulation of reactions, rather than constructing positive circuits or enhancing desirable emotions.

Research also shows that mindfulness practice reduces activity in the amygdala, the brain's center for processing fear and stress. Reduced activity in this region leads to decreased emotional reactivity and better regulation of responses to stressors. This effect is primarily related to tension reduction rather than the enhancement of active positive emotions.

In summary, Buddhist meditation or mindfulness focuses more on quieting excessive mental activity, calming the nervous system, and increasing non-judgmental awareness, rather than creating new meanings or generating positive emotions. The outcome of this process is reduced stress, increased calmness, and an improved ability to remain present in the moment.

Scientific Comparison of Two Types of Meditation: Dhikr and Mindfulness

Meditation, in general, is a powerful tool for managing the mind and emotions, but its methods and goals can differ significantly. In this chapter, we examine two important types of meditation: meditation based on the repetition of positive meanings (Dhikr) and mindfulness meditation, which aims to empty the mind of thoughts and emotions.

Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness means full and non-judgmental attention to the present moment. In this practice, the individual observes their thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations without getting involved with them. The main advantage of this method is the reduction of rumination and stress caused by past or future concerns. Mindfulness practice helps the individual create a distance between themselves and the content of their mind; in other words, they learn to experience their thoughts and emotions as transient events, not as absolute reality. This distance allows the person to experience their emotions without immediate reaction, thereby gaining greater control over their behavior. Moreover, consistent mindfulness practice increases the individual's capacity for attention and presence in daily life, allowing them to live more fully in the moment.

However, mindfulness has limitations. The most important limitation is that, unlike Dhikr or mantra practices, no specific meaning is introduced into the mind. Therefore, neural circuits associated with positive emotions, kindness, calmness, or hope are not actively strengthened, and positive cognitive patterns are not formed. In other words, if the individual's goal is to change mood, strengthen psychological skills, or form positive mental schemas, simply emptying the mind will not be sufficient.

Benefits of Meditation Based on Dhikr or Repetition of Positive Meanings

In this type of meditation, the individual consciously focuses on positive words or concepts such as calmness, love, gratitude, and hope, strengthening neural circuits related to these concepts. The main advantage of this method is the ability to engineer the mind and induce neural reorganization. Repetition of positive meanings strengthens neural pathways associated with calmness, focus, and positive emotions, enabling the mind to adopt these patterns as dominant. Over time, this process consolidates positive cognitive schemas and aligns daily behaviors and emotions with these patterns. Continuous Dhikr practice also enhances the individual's ability to face challenges, reduces anxiety, and increases optimism and resilience.

Summary

In simple terms, mindfulness meditation is a tool for full presence in the moment and reducing emotional reactions, but structural changes in the mind or formation of positive patterns require focus and repetition of positive content. On the other hand, Dhikr and targeted mental practices are tools for mind engineering and neural reorganization, helping the individual positively transform their mind and psyche.

Ultimately, both types of meditation are valuable, but the goal of the individual determines which method is more suitable:

- If the goal is increased presence and stress reduction, mindfulness is the best option.
- If the goal is mind transformation, mood enhancement, and consolidation of positive psychological skills, Dhikr and repetition of positive meanings are more effective.

Chapter Four

A Comparative Study of Buddhist Spirituality and Islamic Mysticism

Differences Between Buddhist Mysticism and Islamic Mysticism

1. Ontology:

The view of existence and the nature of the world is one of the fundamental differences between Buddhist mysticism and Islamic mysticism. This difference affects not only the philosophy of being but also the goals and methods of mystical practice.

- Buddhist Mysticism: From the Buddhist perspective, existence is uniform and homogeneous, and it does not possess independent intrinsic levels. The world is full of suffering and dissatisfaction, as described in the teachings of "dukkha." Humans and all beings are trapped in the continuous cycle of birth and death, called "samsara." This endless cycle ensures that every being, including humans, is constantly in suffering. The ultimate goal is liberation from this cycle and freedom from suffering. In this view, the world has no higher or lower degrees of existence; everything is in a state of flux and change. In other words, the world is uniform, and the primary focus is on awareness and mental liberation from suffering.
- Islamic Mysticism: In contrast, Islamic mysticism views existence differently. Existence is hierarchical and has varying degrees. The world has two dimensions: the higher realm with a strong degree of existence and the lower realm with a lesser degree. The lower world originates from the higher world, and this hierarchy provides a basis for the growth and perfection of humans and other beings.
  A key point in Islamic ontology is the issue of love and manifestation. The higher realm is the manifestation of divine love, and the lower realm is the reflection of this

love in various levels of existence. In other words, existence is not only hierarchical but also a medium for the manifestation of absolute love. Human movement along the path of Islamic mysticism allows the experience of this manifestation and connection to the higher sources of existence, guiding humans from lower, material limitations to the understanding and deep spiritual tranquility of the soul.

Thus, while Buddhist mysticism emphasizes the uniformity of the world and suffering, Islamic mysticism focuses on the degrees of existence, divine love, its manifestation in material and spiritual realms, and the path of ascent and human perfection.

2. The Nature of Human Beings:

The view of humans and the "self" is another fundamental difference between Buddhist and Islamic mysticism.

- Buddhist Mysticism: In Buddhist mysticism, the "self" or "I" does not have a fixed and permanent existence. A human is a transient and changing collection of five fundamental elements, or "skandhas": body, feelings, perceptions, reactions, and consciousness. All these elements are impermanent and none are stable on their own. From this perspective, the "self" is an illusion or a mental construct; it does not exist in reality and appears only due to temporary cohesion and mental experiences. The goal of Buddhist practice is to understand this impermanence, reduce attachments, and achieve liberation from the cycle of suffering and birth and death.
- Islamic Mysticism: In contrast, Islamic mysticism emphasizes the existence of a permanent and eternal

"spirit." Humans possess a divine essence that descends from the higher realm of unity and, with this spirit, has the ability to connect to higher truths and achieve perfection. The true "self" is the spirit; an essence that neither changes with time nor is limited by material constraints. In Islamic mysticism, recognition and reverence of this true self is the starting point of spiritual practice and the path of growth and nearness to the higher realm.

3. Main Method of Practice:

The training methods in Buddhist and Islamic mysticism reflect their ontology and view of human beings, and their fundamental difference lies in how they interact with the mind and inner experience.

- Buddhist Mysticism: The main practice is based on "mindfulness." In this method, the individual learns to observe thoughts, emotions, and bodily states with a neutral perspective, without engaging or judging them. Common exercises include focusing on breathing, the body, or the flow of thoughts so that the mind becomes calm and returns to the present moment. This method is a form of mental subtraction; it emphasizes detachment from attachments, mental fluctuations, and clearing unnecessary thoughts.
- Islamic Mysticism: In Islamic mysticism, the main practice is "dhikr," or the repetition of divine names and attributes. Dhikr can include the names of God, unifying phrases, or exalted concepts. The goal is that through continuous repetition, the mind is drawn toward meaning and the divine source, creating a state of presence and heartfelt connection. This method is additive; the mind is

filled with meaning and positive energy, gradually changing mental patterns and inner experience.

4. The Final State of the Mind:

The final state of the mind in Buddhist and Islamic mysticism reflects the method of practice and each path's view of existence and humans.

- Buddhist Mysticism: The ultimate goal of Buddhist practice is the silence and cessation of the mind. The meditator learns to halt the flow of thoughts and emotions and becomes a pure observer. The mind becomes empty of content and is no longer directed or given meaning. The meditator experiences impartial observation of internal and external phenomena and attains deep peace and stillness.
- Islamic Mysticism: In Islamic mysticism, the ultimate goal of meditation is the cleansing of the mind from futile thoughts along with positive direction. In dhikr practice, the continuous repetition of positive and divine meanings shapes the mind and directs it toward a unified center and higher meanings. The mind not only calms down but also gains direction and purpose, continuing along the spiritual and mystical path.

5. The Role of Emotions:

The role of emotions in Buddhist spirituality and Islamic mysticism is entirely different and reflects each path's view of humans and the world.

- Buddhist Mysticism: The path gradually reduces the self. First, the practitioner learns that they are not the thoughts themselves but the observer of thoughts and mental concepts. Next, attention turns to emotions: the practitioner observes that they are not the emotions themselves but the observer of them. This process gradually diminishes emotions and feelings. Ultimately, even the observer self dissolves, leaving only the fleeting moments and emotions that arise and pass. As noted, Buddhism does not posit an independent essential self. Reducing the human to "nothingness" and living purely in the present leads to a state of thoughtlessness and emotional detachment. The goal of meditation is to achieve peace, but this peace comes at the cost of renouncing emotions, feelings, thoughts, and even the individual essence.
- Islamic Mysticism: In Islamic mysticism, humans possess a luminous and valuable essence, and the world is also of high existential and epistemic status. The mystic senses that their inner self is rich and abundant and that a magnificent and loving world awaits them. This perspective enables the mystic to experience joy and hope, both for themselves and for the future filled with delight and happiness. Such an experience leads to spiritual movement and ecstasy, similar to Rumi and his sema (whirling dance), which arises from the connection with divine meanings and love for the cosmos.

6. Ultimate Goal:

- Buddhist Mysticism: The ultimate goal is to achieve "mental peace and silence" (Nirvana) and complete liberation from suffering and the cycle of birth and death.

- Islamic Mysticism: The ultimate goal is “union and return to unity,” meaning reaching the “original homeland” (the Presence of the Truth), accompanied by security, love, and positive emotions.

Chapter Five

(Positive and Negative Aspects of Buddhist Spirituality and Islamic Mysticism)

Positive and Negative Aspects of Buddhist Mysticism

Negative aspects of Buddhist mysticism:

Buddhist mysticism tends to have a largely isolationist inclination. A Buddhist mystic usually distances themselves from social life and becomes indifferent to the body and physical needs. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, this mysticism sees humans as somewhat empty of emotion and feeling. As a result, human emotions and affections are suppressed or diminished for the sake of achieving inner peace.

Positive aspects of Buddhist mysticism:

Buddhist mysticism and meditation are very practical and applicable. As mentioned, perhaps one of Buddha's greatest spiritual discoveries was that by paying attention to and focusing on the body, the mind can be calmed and silenced. Due to its simplicity and practicality, Buddhist mysticism can be practiced by people of different ages and can be easily applied.

Positive and Negative Aspects of Islamic Mysticism

Negative aspects of some currents of Islamic mysticism: Islamic mysticism, especially in some sects and currents, also tends toward isolation. In these views, insufficient attention is given to the body and physical needs, and sometimes these needs are labeled negatively or harshly. In contrast, in ethics and religion, the body and its needs should be addressed in a balanced

manner. What is criticized is excessive attention to the body, not reasonable and balanced attention to physical needs.

Some mystical groups resort to self-denial and suppression of the inner self for spiritual growth, while true spiritual development and human dignity come from honoring and valuing the self. Although certain inner desires related to power, wealth, or material inclinations should be managed in a refined way, nothing justifies complete suppression or humiliation of the inner self.

In some mystical currents, the inner dimensions of humans are described with very numerous and sometimes ambiguous terms, which lack clarity and practical utility. Another issue is making grand supernatural claims. Some groups present mysticism not as inner growth and purification, but as something extraordinary or supernatural, implying that the mystic can perform actions like flying or magic. In reality, the true message of Islamic mystics emphasizes inner and spiritual growth, not breaking the natural order. As we know, the order of nature is the most certain principle of the universe, and science only discovers this order. Presenting mysticism as supernatural may initially attract attention, but it ultimately leads to disappointment because the main goal of mysticism is the spiritual and inner development of humans.

Another negative aspect is the emphasis by some groups on rapid or instantaneous spiritual growth. Just as the body requires gradual training to reach optimal readiness and care, spiritual growth and the formation of virtuous habits are also gradual processes that require ongoing effort, practice, and supervision. Stories of sudden attainment by some mystics often ignore years of gradual training and life-long progress.

Positive aspects of Islamic mysticism:

Islamic mysticism is very rich and profound in spiritual content, but it has not fully become practical and universal because the methods of the mystics for inner growth have not yet been extracted and systematized in a logical and organized way. This has partially caused Islamic mysticism to remain relatively unknown in the contemporary world.

Islamic mysticism does not empty humans of emotions and feelings. Rather, it fills them with positive and elevated emotions. This mysticism presents a deep and expansive map of existence and sees the world as full of love and meaning. Islamic mysticism is full of feelings such as love, hope, and a sense of immortality because the mystic believes that they do not perish; instead, the soul transitions from the body and material world to a more subtle and refined realm.

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